USA Services

Results of BDR for "Agency Activities for Citizen Inquiry/Response" and Follow-up Survey

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Office Citizen Services & Communications
General Services Administration

Overview

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  - Agency participation
  - Activities by type and volume
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Overview (Continued)

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  - Objectives
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BDR Objectives

- OMB sought the current status (census) of contact activities across the government
- BDR Issued 7/27/04 Due Date: 8/20/04
- USA Services seeks to create a baseline
- Serve as the basis for creating standards

Data Summary

- 49 Agencies included
  - 15 Cabinet-level agencies
  - 34 Independent/Quasi-independent agencies
- 1,828 total activities reported

Represents a statistically significant cross representation of government agencies of all types, levels and sizes.

Activities by Type

Activity Type	Number	%
Call or Contact Center	520	28.45%
Toll-Free Number	329	18.00%
Web-Based E-mail Address	273	14.93%
Dedicated Public E-Mail Address	569	31.13%
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	51	2.79%
Automated FAQ System	51	2.79%
Interactive web page	23	1.26%
Other	12	0.65%
TOTAL:	1,828	100.0%

- Call or Contact Center
- Toll-Free Number
- Web-Based E-mail Address
- Dedicated Public E-Mail Address
- Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)
- Automated FAQ System
- Interactive web page
- Other
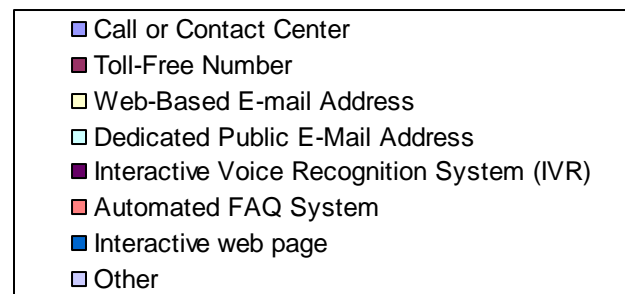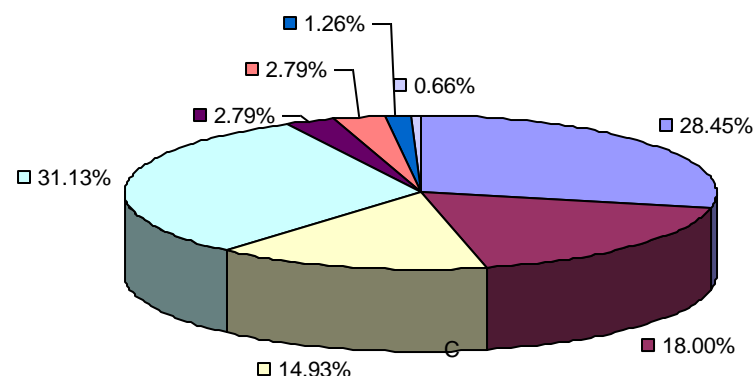
FTEs by Activity

Activity Type	Avg. FTEs	%
Call or Contact Center	183.03	63.77%
Toll-Free Number	68.37	23.82%
Web-Based E-mail Address	22.56	7.85%
Dedicated Public E-Mail Address	7.12	2.48%
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	0.738	0.26%
Automated FAQ System	3.83	1.33%
Interactive web page	1.39	0.48%
OVERALL AVERAGE/ALL ACTIVITIES:	41.004	100%

Activities by Volume

Activity Type	Min	Max	Avg.
Call or Contact Center	5,912	14,319	10,115
Toll-Free Number	2,893	7,972	5,432
Web-Based E-mail Address	4,711	11,979	8,345
Dedicated Public E-Mail Address	652	3,159	1,905
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	15,942	36,784	26,392
Automated FAQ System	15,451	32,039	23,745
Interactive web page	1,718	5,739	3,728
Other	4,167	9,208	6,687
TOTAL ALL ACTIVITIES:	4,034	10,333	7,183

Average Volume by Activity
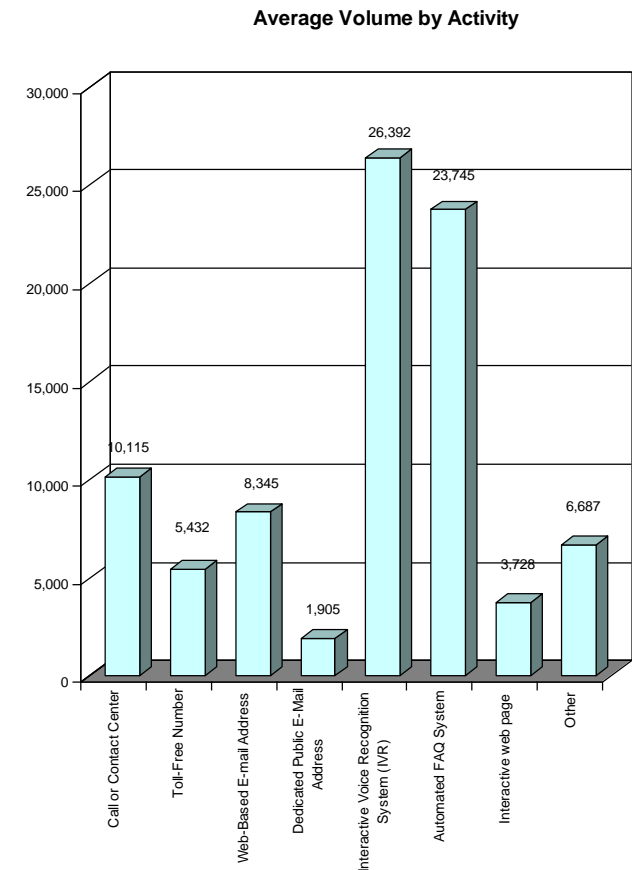
Activities – Percentage with cost/performance metrics

| Activity Type	% w/Performance Metrics	% w/Cost Metrics
Call or Contact Center	41%	22%
Toll-Free Number	37%	43%
Web-Based E-mail Address	27%	8%
Dedicated Public E-Mail Address	19%	10%
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	29%	16%
Automated FAQ System	22%	8%
Interactive web page	39%	22%
Other	33%	17%

Activities by volume – Percentage with cost/performance metrics

Activity Type	% w/Performance Metrics	% w/Cost Metrics
Call or Contact Center	82%	62%
Toll-Free Number	76%	38%
Web-Based E-mail Address	52%	19%
Dedicated Public E-Mail Address	30%	16%
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	66%	41%
Automated FAQ System	57%	25%
Interactive web page	62%	10%
Other	3%	1%

Activities with Performance Metrics
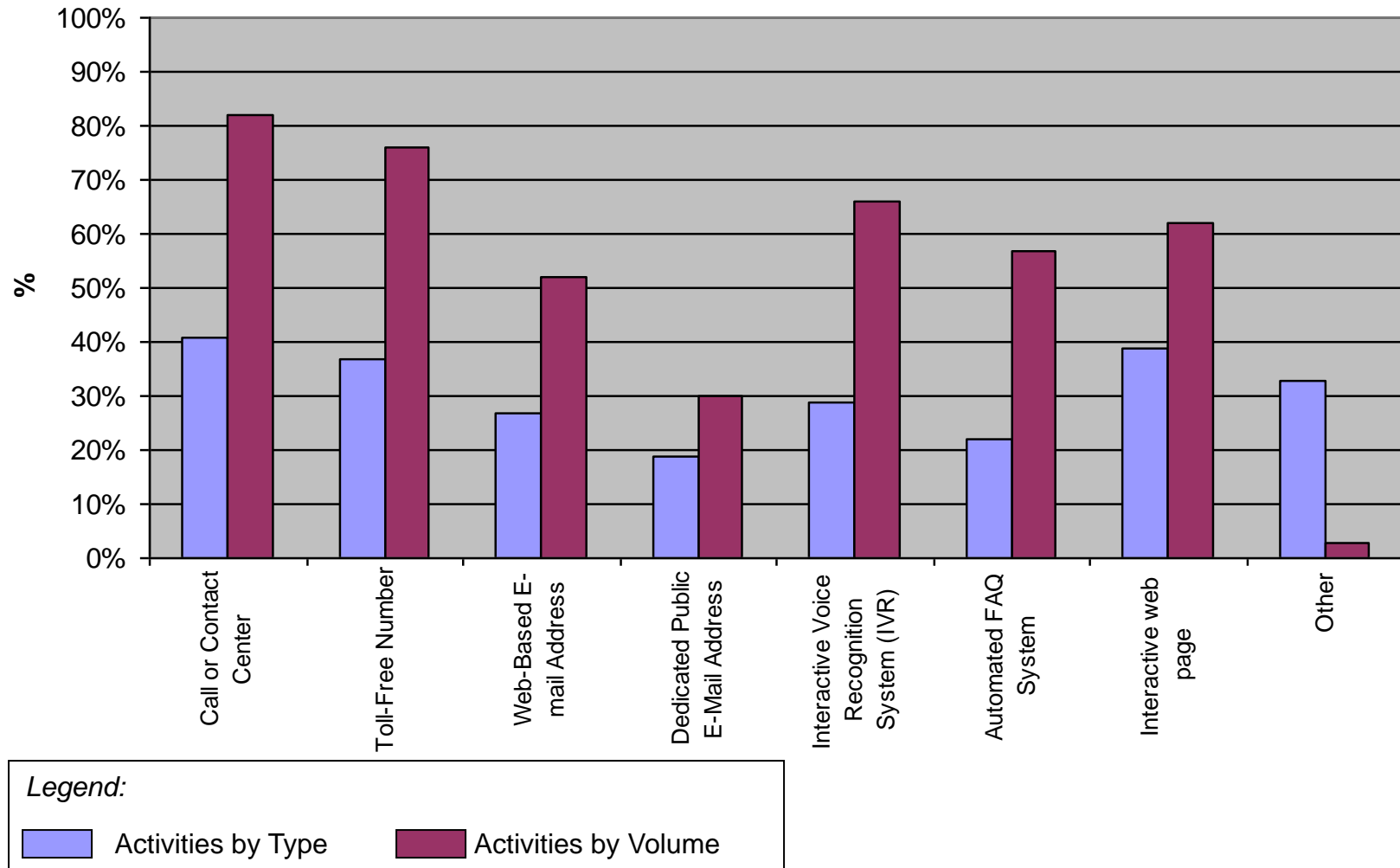
Activities with Cost Metrics
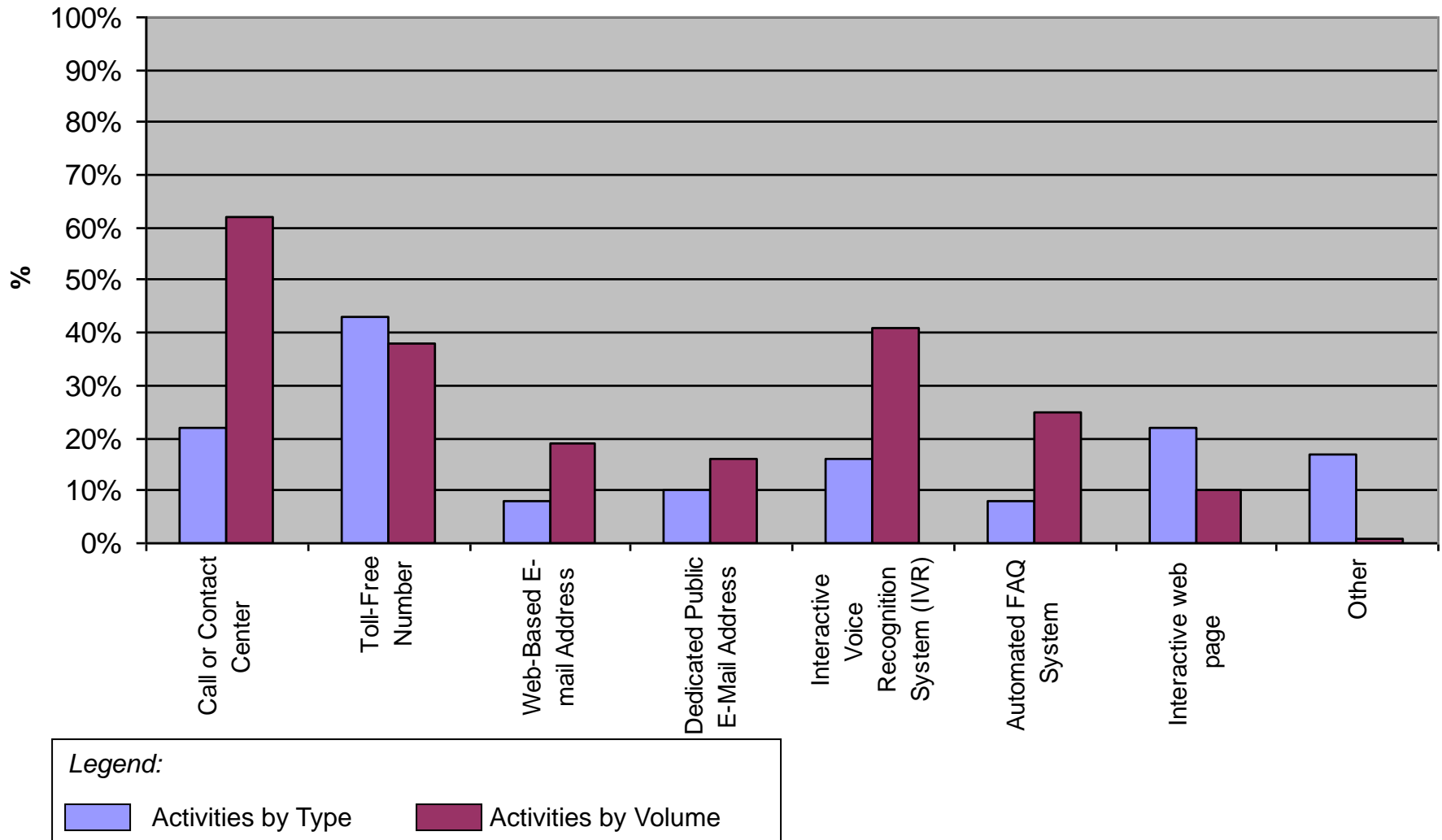
Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (All Activities)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume – All Activities
1	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	1,227,000
2	U.S. Department of Education	1,034,750
3	U.S. Department of Agriculture	730,000
4	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	695,500
5	Social Security Administration	576,000
6	Federal Trade Commission	562,000
7	United States Postal Service	560,000
8	U.S. Department of State	507,000
9	General Services Administration	504,250
10	U.S. Department of Labor	490,000

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Call or Contact Centers)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	U.S. Department of Agriculture	632,000
2	U.S. Department of Education	495,000
3	U.S. Department of the Treasury	491,500
4	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	356,250
5	Social Security Administration	255,500
6	General Services Administration	248,250
7	HUD	237,750
8	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	199,000
9	U.S. Department of Labor	187,000
10	Selective Services	168,250

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Toll-Free Number)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	453,250
2	U.S. Department of Education	346,500
3	U.S. Department of State	156,500
4	U.S. Department of Labor	99,750
5	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	88,750
6	U.S. Department of Transportation	47,000
7	EEOC	44,000
8	FCC	37,500
9	U.S. Department of Justice	37,000
10	U.S. Department of Agriculture	27,000

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Web-Based E-mail Form System)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	349,750
2	National Science Foundation	189,000
3	Federal Trade Commission	174,000
4	U.S. Department of Education	170,500
5	U.S. Department of the Interior	170,500
6	Social Security Administration	169,000
7	General Services Administration	163,000
8	Office of Personnel Management	151,500
9	United States Postal Service	75,000
10	U.S. Department of Commerce	40,500

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Dedicated Public E-Mail Address)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	Federal Trade Commission	151,500
2	U.S. Department of State	69,500
3	Securities and Exchange Comm.	56,500
4	Office of Personnel Management	52,750
5	U.S. Department of Transportation	46,250
6	U.S. Department of Labor	39,250
7	U.S. Department of Education	21,250
8	General Services Administration	19,000
9	FCC	19,000
10	NASA	18,750

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (IVR)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	Department of State	234,250
2	United States Postal Service	167,500
3	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	150,000
4	Federal Trade Commission	150,000
5	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	75,000
6	HUD	75,000
7	U.S. Department of Labor	60,750
8	General Services Administration	37,500
9	U.S. Department of Agriculture	37,500
10	U.S. Department of Commerce	6,500

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Automated FAQ System)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	U.S. Department of Commerce	187,500
2	HHS	150,750
3	U.S. Department of Justice	150,750
4	Social Security Administration	150,000
5	United States Postal Service	150,000
6	U.S. Department of the Treasury	150,000
7	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	150,000
8	U.S. Department of the Interior	39,000
9	U.S. Department of Labor	38,250
10	NARA	17,500

Agency Ranking – Volume of Contacts (Interactive Web Page)

Rank	Agency	Avg. Monthly Volume
1	U.S. Department of Labor	45,500
2	General Services Administration	17,500
3	Corporation for National and Community Service	6,500
4	U.S. Department of Commerce	6,500
5	Selective Services	750
6	U.S. Department of Energy	750
7	FCC	750
8	Environmental Protection Agency	750
9	U.S. Department of Education	750

Summary of Results

- Call/Contact Centers and Dedicated Public E-Mail Address Systems comprise 59.57% of agency activities
- 556 activities (34.7%) report performance metrics are collected
- 354 activities (22.1%) report cost metrics are collected

What Does the Data Tell Us?

- In general, data collected is in line with the relative size of agencies (i.e., cabinet-level agencies account for a higher proportion of activities and volume).

- Both performance and cost metric collection for activities is low

     * Average of 35% of all activities collect performance metrics

     * Average 22% of all activities collect cost metrics

However, data also shows that the higher the volume of contacts, the higher the likelihood that metrics are collected.

What Does the Data Tell Us?

- While all of the cabinet-level agencies report collecting cost and performance metrics for at least some of their activities, only 75% of independent agencies report collecting performance metrics and only 50% report collecting cost metrics.

- Based on the volume of data collected, the next steps of the analysis should generate statistically viable samples.

Next Steps

- Complete follow up web survey with BDR contacts

- Conduct survey of citizen research

- Conduct survey of industry and agency benchmarking

- Establish working group to draft service levels

- Recommend citizen service performance levels to OMB

Follow-up Survey

Objectives

- A more detailed survey, primarily to collect specific performance and cost data.

- Results to be used to develop cost models and benchmarks for use across agencies.

Methodology

- Surveys were administered via a secure, web-based portal
  - E-mails containing unique user names and passwords as well as a link to the site were sent to contacts requesting participation.

- Survey questions were grouped in four primary areas: performance, cost metrics (operations), technology, and policy.

Methodology (continued)

- Samples were collected for each of the seven activities based primarily on those collecting performance/cost metrics.

Sample Selection and Response Rate

Activity Type	Number of Activities Reported*	Number (%) of Activities Collecting Cost and Performance Metrics	Sample Size	#Number (Percentage) of Survey Responses	
				#	%
Call/Contact Center	520	142 (27.3%)	57	41	71.93%
Toll-Free Number	329	78 (23.7%)	69	17	24.64%
Web-Based E-mail Address	273	93 (34.1%)	73	31	42.47%
Dedicated Public E-mail Address	569	89 (15.6%)	94	56	59.57%
Interactive Voice Recognition System (IVR)	51	8 (15.7%)	16	3	18.75%
Automated FAQ System	51	3 (5.9%)	40	11	27.50%
Interactive web page	23	8 (34.8%)	11	2	18.18%
Other	12	2 (16.7%)	0	n/a	n/a
TOTAL:	1,828	423	360	161	44.72%

* Subsequent to the start of the survey, additional BDRs were received, which changed the total number of activities from 1,601 to the current total. As a result, survey sample targets were selected from the original 1,601 total activities only. A breakdown of the initial 1,601 activities is provided in Appendix 2.

Data Analysis

- Results from multiple choice/selection questions were compiled (number and percent).

- Results from numerical responses were compiled, and the mean, standard deviation, and ranges (minimum and maximum) were calculated.

  - T-tests to calculate confidence intervals were also performed on these results.

Data Analysis (continued)

- Linear regression analysis as well as correlation analysis were performed on certain variables.
  - Looks for relationships between variables (i.e., how much of the cost per inquiry of an activity can be explained by the number of FTEs)
  - Allows an assessment of the accuracy of the responses received
  - Correlation analysis measures the strength of relationships between variables (positive or negative correlations)

Key Findings

- Almost all activities reported performance goals related to providing citizens with consistent, accurate, and relevant information in a timely manner.

- Answers to questions allowing free-form responses resulted in highly varied answers; as a result, statistically significant conclusions could not be made.
  - Free-form answers were also less likely to be answered

Key Findings (continued)

- Relationships between variables varied across activities—while there were some weak relationships existing for some activities, there was no relationship evident for other activities.
  - Example: The number of FTEs for both call/contact centers and dedicated public e-mail systems accounted for 58% and 74%, respectively, of the cost per inquiry. However, the number of FTEs only accounted for 5% of the cost per inquiry for web-based e-mail form systems.
  - This finding is further reflective of the wide variation of the responses.

Conclusions

- Agencies/activities currently do not collect standardized, comparable metrics.

- Highly complex, variable activities may resist a standardized metric or measurement framework.

- Collection of standardized performance metrics tailored to specific contexts will benefit agencies, leading to improved citizen contact activities.

Conclusions (continued)

- The government could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of citizen contact activities by implementing a performance-based measurement system appropriate to each activity type, yet allowing for meaningful comparison across all activities.

Recommendations

- Determine in more detail current methods of measuring cost and performance.

- Determine standard cost drivers across all activities to form the basis for a standardized metrics framework.

- Identify a range of options for determining the scale of potential efficiencies in both operations and costs.

Recommendations (continued)

- Examine industry benchmarks to determine their applicability across various activities, agencies, or other cross-sections of government citizen contact activities.

- Determine appropriate service-level targets from the citizen's perspective.

- Develop a uniform structure for standardizing measurement elements and methods for implementation across agencies.

Recommendations (continued)

- Ensure that future surveys are designed and administered in a way that collects comparable data in order to support more in-depth and insightful analysis.

- Educate stakeholders about the value of consistent measurement and reporting of performance and cost goals.

Recommendations (continued)

- Assess and disseminate information to stakeholders about the long-term potential of achieving economies of scale for citizen contact activities.

- Carry this work forward in order to support other OMB initiatives for standardization of reporting methods across agencies.